

TIMELINE FOR NEW HAMPSHIRE'S FIRST STATE HOUSE

- 1741 New Hampshire was separated from Massachusetts by the King in Council.
- 1742 The Province of New Hampshire emitted £25,000 in bills of credit to fund the new government and to undertake public works, including construction of a state house.
- The New Hampshire government continued to meet in rented rooms in Portsmouth taverns.
- 1752 The house of representative appointed Richard Jenness, Henry Sherburne, Jr., and speaker Meshech Weare a committee to join with a delegate from the council to select a site for a state house and to prepare a plan for the building.
- 1753 John Downing of the council presented a plan for a brick state house, to measure 30 by 80 feet.
- 1754 The house of representatives voted that “the Parade, so-called, by the North meeting-House in Portsmouth . . . is the most suitable and proper place to set the said [State] House upon, provided the Town of Portsmouth will consent thereunto.”
- The house of representatives voted to appropriate £2,000 to build the state house, but voted that the materials be changed from brick to wood and that a cupola, shown on the plan, be omitted.
- 1757 After several unsuccessful attempts to get Governor Benning Wentworth to assent to the house vote, the house increased the appropriation to £2,500 new tenor, and the governor concurred.
- Henry Sherburne, Jr., and Clement March of the house joined Mark Hunking Wentworth (Governor Wentworth’s brother) and Daniel Warner (Henry Sherburne Jr.’s father-in-law) of the council to form a building committee. The committee was charged with contracting for “the building of said house [with] such person or persons as will build the same in the best manner.”
- 1758 The committee advertised for bids to frame, raise, and finish the exterior of the building. A few weeks later, this invitation was followed by a second advertisement for completing the glazing, painting, and chimney, together with interior floors, partitions, and plastering.
- 1759 The building was illuminated with fifty pounds of candles to celebrate the capture of Quebec.

- 1760 The first stage of construction was completed. Total cost was £3,773.3.0¼ new tenor, leaving a deficit in the building fund of £1,273.3.0¼.
- 1762 The building was furnished with chairs, tables, fireplace equipment, and writing supplies.
- 1764 The house of representatives voted to complete the structure. The second phase of construction included the addition of stone steps at the two end doors, a cupola, a balcony at the eastern end on the second story, and a roof balustrade.
- 1765 Protests against the Stamp Act were held at the state house.
- 1767 Governor John Wentworth was inaugurated at the state house.
- 1769 The second phase of construction and finishing was completed.
- 1774 A protest against the importation of British tea was held at the state house.
- 1776 The Declaration of Independence was read from the state house.
- 1783 Peace with Great Britain was declared at the state house.
- 1788 The state house was illuminated to celebrate New Hampshire's ratification of the United States Constitution. New Hampshire's vote (the ninth of thirteen) established the Constitution as the plan of government for the nation.
- 1789 President George Washington was received by the citizens of Portsmouth, making a speech from the state house balcony.
- 1803 Following the first of three great Portsmouth fires, Portsmouth citizens petitioned the general court for permission to remove the state house from the Parade as part of a street-widening program and as a means of reducing the danger of fire from this large, wooden structure. The legislature responded with an act (not utilized at that time) empowering the town to remove the building.
- 1808 Concord was selected as the permanent seat of state government, leaving the state house to function as a Rockingham County court house and a home for various Portsmouth organizations.
- 1817 The Town of Portsmouth, having assumed responsibility for maintenance of the state house, carried out the first of a series of repairs, some of which entailed removal of deteriorated exterior architectural features.
- 1834 The Portsmouth town meeting resolved that the state house "ought to be removed" from Market Square.

- 1836 The Town of Portsmouth entered into agreements with the North Congregational Church, the State of New Hampshire, Rockingham County, and other interested parties to remove the state house from Market Square. Private citizens subscribed \$700 toward costs of removal in order that the square might be opened up to enhance beauty, traffic, and business.

The structure was sold to Capt. Israel Marden, who began to strip the building. Marden sold the eastern end of the structure to Mads Danielson, a Norwegian-born boarding house proprietor who owned a lot on Pitt (later Court) Street.

Danielson boarded up the open end of the fragment with second-hand timbers and boards and had the shell removed and remodeled into a Greek Revival-style dwelling that long stood at 47 Court Street.

- 1876 Sarah Haven Foster noted in her *The Portsmouth Guidebook* that the building at 47 Court Street was part of the old state house. This was followed by a similar note by Lewis W. Brewster in the *Portsmouth Journal* of April 6, 1878.
- 1902 Photographer Caleb Stevens Gurney published his *Portsmouth . . . Historic and Picturesque*. This book included a photo-montage, based on the existing portion of the state house at 47 Court Street, that purported to show the building as it had stood on the Parade “according to the testimony of many old people, who can remember it distinctly.” Being based in part on the remodeled fragment on Court Street, this photograph depicted the building with Greek Revival-style exterior detailing. Being guided by the memories of people who would have seen the building in its days of decline, after the removal of many important exterior features, the montage showed the structure with no cupola, roof balustrade, or other imposing ornamentation.
- 1935 In consultation with Portsmouth mayor Robert Marvin and local architects and historians, Donald Corley, architectural research advisor to the Works Progress Administration, suggested that the old state house be “rebuilt” as part of an ambitious slum-clearance project proposed for Portsmouth.
- 1958 Founders of Strawberry Banke, Inc., a historical preservation project, made the acquisition of the building at 47 Court Street part of their plans, proposing to move it to an area to be acquired through an urban renewal program and to reconstruct and restore the building as the centerpiece of a group of buildings to be moved to the site to illustrate the political history of Portsmouth and New Hampshire.
- 1967 Supporters of Strawberry Banke in the New Hampshire legislature secured passage of a law appropriating \$35,000 with which the New Hampshire Division of Parks would purchase the building from its private owners and move it to a site within the Strawberry Banke property.

- 1969 The State of New Hampshire secured title to the building at a price of \$13,500 and moved it a short distance to Strawberry Banke at an additional cost of \$15,523.
- 1987 The New Hampshire legislature passed a law appropriating funds to study the building and its history, design, and materials. The newly reorganized New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (the State Historic Preservation Office, now detached from the Department of Resources and Economic Development) was made responsible for this report.
- 1988 The Division of Historical Resources contracted with Salmon Falls Architecture; Adams & Roy Consultants; and Dodge, Adams & Roy, contractors, to carry out a physical investigation of the surviving portion of the old state house and prepare a detailed report and analysis, written by Gregory Clancey of Adams & Roy Consultants and entitled "Historic Structure Report: Old New Hampshire Statehouse, Portsmouth, N. H."
- 1988 State Senator Elaine Krasker of Portsmouth introduced a bill that would have appropriated \$1,175,000 to restore and reconstruct the old state house in Portsmouth as a museum of New Hampshire's history under royal government. By this time, Strawberry Banke, Inc. (now called Strawberry Banke Museum) had changed its interpretive emphasis to focus on the Puddle Dock neighborhood. The museum no longer desired to have the surviving portion of the state house on its property except under circumstances that would have been financially advantageous to the institution. Because of impending state fiscal deficits, Senator Krasker's bill was defeated along with most other legislation that required capital appropriations.
- 1989 Because the building was in rapidly deteriorating condition, Senator Krasker introduced successful legislation to appropriate \$50,000 to mark each element of the state house fragment, to dismantle the structure, and to transport the disassembled building to a place of safe storage.
- 1990 The building was disassembled, packed in a purchased second-hand forty-foot trailer, and brought to state property in Concord.
- 1998 On the occasion of Portsmouth's 375th anniversary of settlement, Portsmouth Mayor Evelyn Sirrell appointed a committee to bring the state house back to Portsmouth. The committee worked from 1998 through 2008.
- 2004 Working with Nancy Carmer of the Portsmouth Community Development Department, the City's Blue Ribbon State House Committee planned the installation, using Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) monies, of a bronze tablet commemorating the original location of the state house in Market Square.

- 2004 Senator Judd Gregg announced that the Division of Historical Resources would be receiving \$250,000 in federal funds under the Economic Development Initiatives program to determine the best use of the resource.
- 2007 HUD EDI grant funds are appropriated.
- 2008 Building conservator completes a *Conditions Assessment* of the building elements.
- 2010 The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources employed Laura S. Black as Project Director to continue the work of Peter Michaud, who had been hired to carry out the initiatives of the EDI grant and subsequently transferred to another position within the Division.
- 2011 Project architects complete *digital images* of the remaining eighteenth-century elements depicting how they would fit together, as well as conjectured reconstruction images in a variety of settings.